Keynote address

by

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Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries
and Small Island Developing States

side-event on

“Resources for Data and Statistics: Transformative Opportunities”

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4:00 – 6:00 p.m.

United Nations Foundation
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Excellencies

Ladies and Gentlemen,

colleagues and friends

thank you for inviting me! This not only is an important but also very timely side event. Agenda 2030 makes a very ambitious statement of leaving no one behind and this demands of all of us to work, to work fast and to do so grounded in data and facts - rather than sentiment ...

The centrality of data and statistics for tackling development challenges can never be overstated. And it can especially not be overstated at a moment where people so often wonder what is real and what is imaginary - or as the saying goes "fake". The “leave no one behind” promise we made takes on very special meaning for the 91 countries - the over one billion people - for which my Office is a voice: the Least Developed Countries, the Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States.

Data is at the core of analysis, design and implementation of policies that can generate desired impact.

Data touches upon every area of development and should concern us all. Without data, how would governments know where to target investments and expenditure, whether to build schools, roads, hospitals, telecommunications or new power stations? Without data, how can we measure if what we do works?

Data, statistics play a critical role for national policy-makers and development partners alike and civil society! And it goes beyond design and delivery of policies - data driven and informed communication when data are timely and trusted helps communication!

The SDGs focus attention on the statistical community.

The reality though is that the case for accelerated investment in development data must continue to be made and that the resulting benefits often are quite poorly communicated beyond expert circles.

Even prior to Agenda 2030, it was clear that we experienced a pervasive funding gap to strengthen statistics capacities.

Agenda 2030 with its call to “leave no one behind” requires ever more granular information to identify and reach marginalized groups - so the funding gap is now of even more concern!

We need more and more targeted investments.

With the current levels of funding, carrying out statistical operations becomes a major challenge.

PARIS21’s 2018 Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS) shows that Official Development Assistance for data and statistics reached USD 623 million in 2016 and this represents just a mere 0.30% of total development support!
Recent estimates from our PARIS21 colleagues suggest that a high-ambition costing of the full Cape Town Global Action Plan will total some USD 5.6 billion per year through to 2030, for 75 IDA and 69 IBRD countries. The challenge for developing and consolidating the needs of the global statistical system is more important than previously thought.

In spite of these difficulties, the aggregate funding required to close such gaps remains modest, when considered relative to other national SDG investments and to overall international development flows.

However, mobilizing more and better funding for development data faces particular challenges.

These include:

low political awareness, fragmentation of assistance interventions, poor alignment to national priorities, and insufficient involvement of new actors.

As we look to the 3rd UN World Data Forum in 2020 in Bern, Switzerland, it is crucial to make progress on the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data.

New opportunities and actors are joining the data community, and co-ordination will be key to ensure the efficient use of resources.

In order to provide countries with the support they need, it is encouraging to see the statistical and development community coming together to re-think how alternative funding mechanisms could attract new resources.

A concerted and focused financing response is needed!

The 2020 UN World Data Forum offers an excellent opportunity to engage different stakeholders and bring together different strands.

We must closely involve developing country governments, we must look into new initiatives involving civil society and foundations, we must attract non-traditional providers of assistance including from the South, and we definitely must make progress in the responsiveness of technical and financial assistance so that it responds effectively to national needs.

Needless to say, we also must ensure collaboration with multilateral agencies and thematic global funds, and promoting higher-profile advocacy and research.

Given the situation and the needs I just spoke to, I must applaud the efforts by the recently-established “Bern Network on Financing Data for Development”.

The network’s double objective of improving existing funding and mobilizing the much-needed additional resources through a new to be established global funding mechanism already address concerns I shared with you.
This new global funding mechanism - which could for instance take the form of a global fund facility, as in other development sectors - has great potential to mobilize a better aligned and coordinated funding response to national development data needs and efforts.

So, I am excited to see that the “Bern Network” has brought together such a diverse collection of actors.

And I add, I am very glad to see how we are all interested in discussing how to increase the financial resources for data and statistics. As the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data (CTGAP) aptly points out “We call for policy leaders to achieve a global pact or alliance that recognizes the funding of NSS modernization efforts is essential to the full implementation of Agenda 2030.” The creation of a “Bern Network” to collectively prioritize funding around data and statistics is an excellent step in this direction. So, rather than "driving in the dark ", let us make every effort to drive with data toward that day where truly no one is left behind.

Thank you.